

Message Text

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USOECD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UNCTAD, EGEN

SUBJECT: UNCTAD - RESULTS OF 17TH SESSION OF TRADE & DEVELOPMENT
BOARD

REF: GENEVA 7576

1. SUMMARY: THE SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE UNCTAD TRADE AND
DEVELOPMENT BOARD (TDB), AUGUST 23 - SEPTEMBER 2, WAS A
RELATIVELY QUIET AND NON-CONTROVERSIAL MEETING THAT PRINCIPALLY
FOCUSED ON INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES. PLENARY SESSIONS WERE
HANDLED FAIRLY AND EXPEDITIOUSLY BY THE TDB PRESIDENT, AM-
BASSADOR DE ALWIS OF SRI LANKA, WHO WILL ALSO PRESIDE OVER
THE TDB MINISTERIAL. TWO POTENTIALLY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES
WERE RESOLVED SATISFACTORILY: (1) THE TERMS OF REFERENCE
FOR THE UNCTAD COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC COOPERATION AMONG
DEVELOPMENT COUNTRIES (ECDC); AND (2) CONTAINER STANDARDS
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FOR MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT. DEBATE ON THE INTERDEPENDENCE
OF PROBLEMS OF TRADE, DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AND THE INTER-
NATIONAL MONETARY SYSTEM WAS LOW-KEY, AS THE G-77
WAS MORE CRITICAL OF DOCUMENTATION PREPARED BY THE UNCTAD
SECRETARIAT THAN OF THE PERFORMANCE OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.
THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT TO MODIFY THE TERMS OF
REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE ON SHIPPING WAS POSTPONED TO

THE RESUMED 17TH TDB NEXT SPRING. ADDITIONAL DETAILS ARE REPORTED BELOW ON THESE AND OTHER RESULTS OF THE TDB, INCLUDING RESOLUTIONS ON EXPORTS CREDITS AND AID AND FINANCIAL FLOWS, CONSIDERATION OF EAST/SOUTH TRADE ISSUES, AND OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES. END SUMMARY.

2. ECDC COMMITTEE - ONE MAJOR DECISION TAKEN BY THE 17TH TDB WAS TO FINALIZE THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF UNCTAD'S COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (ECDC), WHICH HELD ITS FIRST SESSION LAST SPRING. (FOR TEXT, SEE GENEVA 7559). IN THE INITIAL STAGES OF GROUP B'S CONSIDERATION OF COMPLETION OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE ECDC COMMITTEE, AS SPECIFIED IN PARA 3 OF RESOLUTION 142 OF THE 16TH TDB, THE GROUP TOOK THE POSITION THAT THE BEST WAY TO ASSURE THAT THE COMMITTEE WAS FULLY OPEN TO PARTICIPATION OF ALL MEMBERS OF UNCTAD, AND THAT ALL MEMBERS HAD THE RIGHT TO BRING PROPOSALS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE, WAS TO WRITE TERMS OF REFERENCE AS SIMILAR AS POSSIBLE TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE OTHER COMMITTEES OF THE TDB WHERE SUCH QUESTIONS ARE NOT CHALLENGED. IT WAS FELT THAT TO ATTEMPT TO SPECIFY AND CLARIFY IN THE TERMS OF REFERENCE THE CONCERNS OF THE GROUP VIS-A-VIS THE COMMITTEE WOULD PROBABLY ONLY RESULT IN A COUNTER-REACTION FROM THE G-77.

3. THE QUESTION OF THE SECRETARIAT SUPPORTING AND PAYING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOR EXCLUSIVE MEETINGS OF THE GROUP OF 77 WAS SEEN AS A PROBLEM SEPARATE FROM THE QUESTION OF THE ECDC TERMS OF REFERENCE, SINCE SUCH ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST MOST FREQUENTLY HAVE NOT BEEN RELATED TO PARTICULAR ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE FIELD OF ECDC, BUT RATHER EITHER TO ACTIVITIES OF OTHER COMMITTEES (SUCH AS TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY) OR TO OVERALL ACTIVITIES RELATED TO UNCTAD (PREPARATIONS FOR THE MANILA CONFERENCE PRECEDING UNCTAD IV, NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE ON COMMODITIES, ETC.). IT WAS FELT THAT THIS QUESTION WOULD HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE BUDGETARY AUTHORITIES COMPETENT TO REVIEW THE UNCTAD BUDGET, I.E., THE UNCTAD WORKING PARTY ON THE PROGRAM-BUDGET (NOW SCHEDULED TO MEET EVERY YEAR, VICE ONCE EVERY TWO YEARS), THE ACQBQ, AND THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNGA. (NO DISCUSSION OF UNCTAD FINANCING AND SUPPORTING EXCLUSIVE G-77 MEETINGS OCCURRED DURING THE BOARD SESSIONS.)

4. GROUP B'S TACTIC PROVED SUCCESSFUL WITH THE G-77 INASMUCH AS THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FINALLY ADOPTED, FOR THE ECDC COMMITTEE, WHILE INCORPORATING THE ELEMENTS OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE ESTABLISHED IN PARA 2 OF TDB RESOLUTION 142(XVI),

FURTHERSPECIFY THE ABILITY OF ALL MEMBEFS TO BRING PROPOSALS

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BEFORE THE COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION. A SLIGHT RE-DRAFTING OF THE PROVISIONS OF PARA 2 OF 142, AS WELL AS THE ADDED PARAGRAPHS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE, MAKE IT CLEAR THAT ALL CONTEMPLATED ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMITTEE ARE "WITHIN THE COMPETENCE OF UNCTAD", AN INTERPRETATION SUPPORTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD IN HIS INTRODUCTORY NOTED TO THE CONSIDERATION OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE.

5. CONCERNING THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON ECDC, GROUP B'S POSITION WAS TO QUESTION THE NEED FOR EVEN MORE RESOURCES FOR BACKSTOPPING THE COMMITTEE'S APPROVED WORK PROGRAM IN VIEW OF THE \$1.7 MILLION ALREADY REQUESTED IN THE 1978/79 PROGRAM BUDGET FOR ESSENTIALLY THE SAME FIELD OF ACTIVITIES, AND THE APPARENT RE-ALLOCATION BY THE SECRETARIAT OF RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY ASSIGNED TO THIS ACTIVITY TO OTHER AREAS OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ENDEAVOR. GROUP B MADE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT AT THE CLOSE OF CONSIDERATION OF THIS AGENDA ITEM: "GROUP B, IN NOTING THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS STATEMENT ON THE PROGRAM OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, BELIEVES THAT THE ACABQ AND THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHOULD GIVE CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THE ADDITIONAL FUNDS REQUESTED FOR THIS PROGRAM. GROUP B NOTES A PARALLELISM BETWEEN THE JUSTIFICATIONS IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL REQUEST AND THOSE ALREADY SUBMITTED IN SECTION 11 OF THE 1978/79 BIENNIUM. THE GROUP ALSO NOTED THAT FULL RESOURCES ALREADY ALLOCATED TOT THIS ACTIVITY DO NOT SEEM TO BE EMPLOYED FOR THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH THEY WERE AUTHORIZED. IN ANY EVENT THE GROUP BELIEVES THAT ANY ADDITIONAL RESOURCES THAT MIGHT BE REQUIRED FOR THIS PROGRAM MUST BE FITTED INTO THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL'S PROSCRIPTION FOR BUDGETARY INCREASES OF NO MORE THAN 2.1 PERCENT IN REAL TERMS." THE GROUP OF 77 ENTERED AN INTERPRETIVE STATEMENT ALSO NOTING THE APPARENT RE-ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES AWAY FROM THIS PROGRAM, THE FAILURE OF THE SECRETARIAT TO FILL VACANCIES THAT HAVE EXISTED FOR SOME TIME, BUT NOTING THAT IT FELT THE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REQUESTED WERE NOT ADEQUATE. GROUP D MADE A VERY GENERALIZED STATEMENT ABOUT EFFICIENCY OF USE OF RESOURCES, AVOIDING DUPLICATION, ETC.

6. CONTAINER STANDARDS FOR MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT - SEE GENEVA 7494.

7. INTERDEPENDENCE. DEBATE ON THIS AGENDA ITEM WAS LARGELY LOW-KEY, AS THE G-77 ENDORSED NEED FOR A COAA ORDINATED APPROACH TOWARD WORLD ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AS OUTLINED IN DOCUMENTATION PREPARED BY THE SECRETARIAT, BUT DID NOT PROPOSE THAT THE TDB PASS ANY RESOLUTION OR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DECISION ON THIS TPOIC. BRIEF REFERENCES WERE MADE TO THE DECEMBER MEETING OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON INTERDEPENDENCE, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO DISCUSS THIS WIDE RANGING TOPIC IN GREATER DETAIL. THE OLD AFRICAN DRAFT RESOLUTION ON INTERDEPENDENCE (TD/B/L.360) WAS NOT DISCUSSED AND WAS ROUTINELY REFERRED TO THE NEXT TDB MEETING. IIN FINAL PLENARY, SEPTEMBER 2, G-77 SPOKESMEN CALLED FOR MORE INTENSIVE STUDY OF ALL ASPECTS OF INTERDEPENDENCE, BUT ALSO CRITICIZED DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY THE SECRETARIAT (TD/B/655 AND ADD.1) FOR INACCURATELY REFLECTING THE POSITION OF CERTAIN LDCS WHICH HAVE GROWING FINANCIAL SUPRLLUSES. FOLLOWING G-77 STATEMENT, COLOMBIAN AND VENEXUELAN DELEGATES PRESENTED MORE LENGTHY CRITICISMS

OF SECRETARIAT DOCUMENTS, SAYING THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE CONTAINED A BETTER BALANCE IN THE TREATMENT OF DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS AND GREATER STRESS ON THE NEED FOR CHANGE TO ACHIEVE A NIEO. THE COLOMBIAN DELEGATE PARTICULARLY QUESTIONS THE DOCUMENT'S PESSIMISTIC CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE PRESENT GROWTH RATE OF HIS COUNTRY'S GDP. WHICH HE SAID IS NOW INCREASING AT A FASTER RATE BECAUSE OF HIGHER COFFEE PRICES.

8. IN PLENARY DEBATE ON INTERDEPENDENCE, SEPTEMBER 1, GROUP B COMMENDED THE SECRETARIAT'S DOCUMENTS ON INTERDEPENDENCE AS VERY USEFUL, EVEN THOUGH THE SECRETARIAT'S INTERPRETATION OF WORLD ECONOMIC EVENTS AND PROSPECTS DIFFER IN SOME WAYS FROM THOSE OF DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF GROUP B. POINTING OUT THAT THERE ARE VARIOUS

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FORMS OF ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE, INCLUDING THE CLOSE LINK BETWEEN ECONOMIC GROWTH IN DCS AND LDCS, GROUP B SAID THAT THE SECRETARIAT'S ANALYSIS SUGGESTS A WIDE RANGE OF SPECIFIC POLICY ISSUES WHICH NEED TO BE ADDRESSED THIS FALL BY THE UNGA, AND THAT WORK ON MANY OF THESE ISSUES IS ALREADY UNDERWAY IN UNCTAD OR IN OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES. FINALLY, GROUP B RECALLED COMMITMENTS MADE TO THE LDCS AT

THE OECD MINISTERIAL MEETING LAST JUNE.

9. THE CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES FOR 1978/79, CONTAINED IN TD/B/L.475, WAS APPROVED ON A PROVISIONAL BASIS, SINCE IT IS SUBJECT TO REVISION IN QUARTERLY CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE UNCTAD SYG AND THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES IN GENEVA. SPECIAL DONOR/RECIPIENT MEETING FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 31-NOVEMBER 8.

10. "FINANCIAL FLOWS" AND "EXPORT CREDITS" ISSUES WERE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEBATED IN SESSIONAL COMMITTEE I, AND DRAFT DECISIONS ON THEM (GENEVA 7581 AND GENEVA 7582) WERE NEGOTIATED IN CO-ORDINATORS' CONTACT GROUP UNDER SC-1 CHAIRMAN'S LEADERSHIP. ORIGINAL G-77 POSITION ON EXPORT CREDIT ITEM WAS THAT UNCTAD SECRETARIAT BE GIVEN MANDATE TO CONSULT WITH LDC'S AND WITH CAPITAL MARKET INSTITUTIONS ABOUT THE KIND OF FACILITY THAT WAS NEEDED AND WOULD BE FEASIBLE. GROUP B MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY FRANCE, WERE ADAMANT THAT SECRETARIAT NOT BE GIVEN BOARD'S MANDATE TO DO ANYTHING FURTHER UNTIL LATEST UNCTAD STUDY (TD/B/655) HAD BEEN REVIEWED BY THE CIFT NEXT YEAR. THIS POSITION WAS ULTIMATELY ACCEPTED BY THE G-77. ON "FLOWS", G-77 INITIALLY INSISTED THAT BOARD ENDORSE NEW TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL EXPERT GROUP AS ENUMERATED IN PARA 32 OF DOCUMENT TD/B/646, BUT FINALLY AGREED THAT FOR THE TIME BEING SECRETARIAT SHOULD MERELY HOLD FURTHER CONSULTATIONS ON THE STATISTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RECORDING FINANCIAL FLOWS WITH APPROPRIATE INSTITUTIONS AND THAT ENTIRE MATTER SHOULD BE REFERRED FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION AND DECISION TO THE SECOND PART OF THE CIFT'S 8TH SESSION NEXT SPRING.

1. EAST/SOUTH TRADE ISSUE WAS GIVEN LOW-KEY PERFUNCTORY TREATMENT. TWO OF FIVE SCHEDULED MEETINGS OF SESSIONAL COMMITTEE 2 WERE CANCELLED WHEN G-77 REPS FAILED TO SHOW. DEBATE WAS CONFINED TO RECITATION OF SELF-SERVING EASTERN BLOC STATEMENTS AND EXPRESSIONS OF POLITE INTEREST BY A FEW LDC'S. GROUP B LIMITED ITS PARTICIPATION TO A SINGLE STATEMENT SUPPORTING GREATER EAST/SOUTH EXCHANGES. SOCIALIST COUNTRIES MADE ONLY RITUALISTIC REFERENCES TO RELEVANCE OF EAST/WEST TRADE QUESTIONS TO EAST/SOUTH TRADE, EXCEPT FOR USSR DEL WHO COMPLAINED POINTEDLY ABOUT REFUSAL OF US TO GRANT MFN TREATMENT AND EXPORT CREDITS TO SOCIALIST COUNTRIES, AND SAID THIS CONSTITUTED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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"DISCRIMINATION" AND RETARDED EXPANSION OF WORLD TRADE. HIGH POINT OF DEBATE WAS AN EXCHANGE BETWEEN MEXICO AND THE USSR. MEXICO PROPOSED THAT SC-2 SHOULD IN FUTURE DISCUSS NOT MERELY "TRADE" BUT ALSO "ECONOMIC" RELATIONS AMONG EE'S AND LDC'S AND THAT UNCTAD SECRETARIAT SHOULD PREPARE DOCUMENTATION EXAMINING SOCIALIST COUNTRY TARIFF BARRIERS, NTB'S, SANITARY REGULATIONS, ETC., AND PROPOSING TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE MEASURES. THE USSR REJECTED THESE SUGGESTIONS ON GROUNDS THAT ECONOMIC RELATIONS WERE INTEGRATED WHOLE CONSTITUTING SUBSTANCE OF UNCTAD'S ENTIRE WORKLOAD AND THAT LDC'S COULD OBTAIN ANY INFORMATION THEY NEEDED ABOUT EE REGULATIONS AND PRACTICES THROUGH BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS. THERE WERE, IN FACT, SEVERAL DOZEN INFORMAL BILATERAL CONTACTS BETWEEN LDC'S AND SOCIALIST COUNTRIES DURING COURSE OF BOARD'S SESSION ARRANGED BY SECRETARIAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH RESOLUTION 95(IV), BUT AS FAR AS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ASCERTAIN, THEY WERE ONLY OF AN INFORMATIONAL CHARACTER.

12. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES. OTHER INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE BOARD WERE (1) MODIFYING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE ON SHIPPING; (2) RATIONALIZATION OF THE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE; AND (3) DOCUMENTATION. THE BOARD DECIDED NOT TO PURSUE AT THIS TIME THE MODIFICATION OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE ON SHIPPING, POSTPONING ACTION TO THE RESUMED 17TH TDB IN VIEW OF THE SHORT TIME ELAPSED SINCE THE CONCLUSION OF THE 63RD ECOSOC CONSIDERATION OF THIS ITEM AND THE TDB. (FOR TEXT, SEE GENEVA 7557).

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THE SECRETARIAT, IN PRESENTING ITS REPORT ON THE ECOSOC DECISION PORTRAYED THE ECOSOC DECISION AS GIVING UNCTAD PERMANENT JURISDICTION OVER QUESTIONS OF MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT AND CONTAINER STANDARDS, WHILE THE IMCO SECRETARIAT (AS WELL AS USDEL WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT AT THE ECOSOC SESSION) UNDERSTOOD THE DECISION TO MERELY CONTINUE THE EXISTING SITUATION, (I.E., UNCTAD WAS GIVEN AD HOC ASSIGNMENTS VIS-A-VIS MULTIMODAL AND CONTAINER STANDARDS, NOT PERMANENT JURISDICTION). THE ATTEMPTS OF THE SECRETARIAT TO PREJUDICE THE INTERPRETATION OF THE ECOSOC DECISION IN THE RESOLUTION WERE AVOIDED BY MERELY NOTING THE SHORTNESS OF TIME FOLLOWING THE ECOSOC DECISION WITHOUT ANY COMMENT ON WHAT WAS OR WAS NOT DECIDED IN THAT BODY.

13. ON THE QUESTION OF RATIONALIZATION OF THE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE, NO GROUP WAS PREPARED TO DISCUSS THE MATTER AT THIS SESSION OF THE BOARD. THERE WAS A GENERAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FEELING THAT SOME MECHANISM FOR INTERSESSIONAL CONSIDERATION BY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES IN GENEVA WOULD HAVE TO BE ESTABLISHED. GROUP B AND THE AFRICA GROUP DID NOT WANT TO PLACE THE QUESTION BEFORE THE USUAL AND USUALLY UNSATISFACTORY) SYSTEM OF CONSULTATIONS WITH THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF UNCTAD, BUT RATHER WANTED THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD TO ORGANIZE SUCH CONSULTATIONS. THE REST OF THE GROUP OF 77, PARTICULARLY THE ASIANS, WHILE SYMPATHETIC WITH THE AFRICAN AND GROUP B POSITION, FELT THERE WAS INSUFFICIENT TIME IN THE FINAL HOURS OF THE BOARD MEETING TO WORK OUT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOME TYPE OF INFORMAL INTERSESSIONAL "STUDY GROUP" TO ADVANCE THE CONSIDERATION OF THE QUESTION OF RATIONALIZATION. THEREFORE, THE TDB DECIDED TO POSTPONE CONSIDERATION OF THE ITEM UNTIL THE 17TH TDB RESUMED SESSION (ON THE CLEAR EXPECTATION THAT IT WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO BE POSTPONED AGAIN UNTILL THE 18TH SESSION), AND TO CALL FOR CONSULTATIONS BY THE SYG WITH REGIONAL GROUPS WHICH ARE TO BE ORGANIZED IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PRESENT OF THE TDB (FOR TEXT, SEE GENEVA 7560).

14. ON DOCUMENTATION, THE OBVIOUS UNHAPPINESS OF ALL GROUPS AND GROWING CRITICISMS BY ALL DIRECTED AT THE SECRETARIAT, CAUSED THE SYG AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE TDB

TO ORGANIZE TWO LENGTHY SESSIONS OF A SMALL GROUP OF INTERESTED DELEGATES TO LOOK MORE DEEPLY INTO THE MATTER. THESE TWO SESSIONS HELPED BRING A GREATER REALITY INTO THE DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTIONS OF PROBLEMS OF DOCUMENTATION AND THE ISSUANCE OF A WELL-BALANCED REPORT BY THE PRESIDENT ON THE PROBLEMS. THE BOARD DECIDED TO FORWARD THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE UNCTAD SECRETARIAT, THE UN OFFICES IN GENEVA, THE ACABQ AND FIFTH COMMITTEE AS WELL AS ANY OTHER COMPETENT BODIES IN THIS AREA. THE TEXT OF THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT WAS ANNEXED TO THE REPORT OF THE TDB TO THE UNGA.
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15. THE TDB ALSO PASSED RESOLUTIONS ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECT, WHICH HAVE BEEN TRANSMITTED TO WASHINGTON:
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COMMODITIES - GENEVA 7580
EXPLOITATION OF THE SEABED - GENEVA 7484VANDEN HEUVEL

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